

How To Include Students With Disabilities In Montana's Criterion-Referenced Test (CRT)

The Requirement:

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that "The state has established goals for the performance of children with disabilities in the state that...are consistent, to the maximum extent appropriate, with other goals and standards for children established by the state." IDEA further requires that all students be included in the state's accountability systems.

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) requires that all students reach high standards and further establishes the requirements for participation and accountability for all students in state assessments used to determine adequate yearly progress (AYP). For students, who as a result of their disability cannot participate in the state's regular assessment, the state education agency (Montana Office of Public Instruction) is required to construct and implement guidelines for their participation in an alternate test. Montana has met this requirement by creating the Criterion-Referenced Test (CRT)-Alternate for those students who are unable to participate in the regular CRT. Results from the CRT-Alternate will be included in the state accountability system on a yearly basis.

Basic Information About The CRT And CRT-Alternate:

Criterion-Referenced Test (CRT)

The Criterion-Referenced Test (CRT) is a new test and will be administered for the first time this spring (March 2004) for all students in grades 4, 8 and 10. It is aligned with Montana's content standards and measures student achievement against these state standards in the reading and math subject areas. The test, consisting of multiple choice, constructed response items, and math short answers was developed using a "universal design." As such, it allows for a broad array of standard accommodations that include accommodations in setting, scheduling, response, and presentation. A list of accommodations, both standard and non-standard, can be found in the test coordinator's handbook and is included with this guidance document. The CRT is also available in large print and Braille formats. Because of the full range of standard accommodations allowed (those that do not change the intent or content of the test), it is expected that the vast majority of students with disabilities will be able to participate in the regular CRT. In those cases where an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) team may have identified an accommodation that would be defined as non-standard accommodation (a practice that changes what the test was intended to measure), the student would still be able to participate in the regular CRT. However, the score achieved on the test taken with a non-standard accommodation would be reported in the 'novice' performance category.

Criterion-Referenced Test-Alternate (CRT-Alternate)

The Criterion-Referenced Test-Alternate (CRT-Alternate) is an evidence-based test that is aligned with Montana's content standards through extended benchmarks and measures student performance based on alternate achievement standards. It is expected that only those students with the most significant cognitive disabilities will participate in the CRT-Alternate.

It is important to note that the scores of students with disabilities participating in the CRT-Alternate that fall into the proficient and advanced range, for purposes of determining adequate yearly progress (AYP), are limited to the 1 percent cap as defined in the final regulations under Title 1 (reference 34 CFR, Part 200). This cap applies at both the state and district levels, but not at the school level.

Assessment Options:

Following are the options available for students with disabilities to participate in the Criterion-Referenced Assessment (CRT):

- Student takes the regular CRT with no accommodations
- Student takes the regular CRT with the use of accommodations
- Student takes the CRT-Alternate

Deciding How The Student With Disabilities Will Participate:

The decisions as to whether a student with disabilities will participate in the regular CRT or the CRT-Alternate, and what accommodations, if any, are to be provided to the student must be documented in the student's IEP prior to administration of the CRT this spring. Participation in the CRT-Alternate is determined by considering each of the following questions:

- Does the student have an active IEP and receive services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)?
- Do the student's demonstrated cognitive abilities and adaptive behavior require substantial adjustments to the general curriculum?
- Do the student's learning objectives and expected outcomes focus on functional application of skills, as illustrated in the student's IEP's annual goals and short-term objectives?
- Does the student require direct and extensive instruction to acquire, maintain, generalize and transfer new skills?

If the answer is NO to any of the above questions, the student must participate in the regular CRT. If all answers are YES, the student is eligible to take the CRT-Alternate and the student is considered to be a student with a significant cognitive disability.

The decision to determine a student's eligibility to participate in the CRT-Alternate may not be based on:

- Excessive or extended absence;
- Disability category;
- Social, cultural or economic difference;
- The amount of time receiving special education services; and
- Academic achievement significantly lower than his or her same age peers.

To ensure that students with disabilities participate in the CRT in the appropriate manner, schools must do the following:

- If a special education student is in grade 4, 8, 10 or in an ungraded program and is of the chronological age of a 4, 8, or 10th grade student, the student's special education teacher must review the student's current IEP, ensure that the IEP appropriately documents the student's participation in the regular CRT or the CRT-Alternate and also addresses the other requirements (see question/answer #13) under IDEA for documenting participation in the state assessment.
- If the student's IEP does not include all of the required assessment documentation for the CRT and/or it is felt that the student may participate in the assessment in a different manner than was previously determined (e.g., instead of the CRT-Alternate, the student can participate in the regular CRT, with or without accommodations), the IEP team must reconvene to address how the student will participate. It is permissible to hold this IEP meeting through a teleconference call with IEP team participants.

Note: A sample form, to assist IEP teams in addressing the assessment requirements under IDEA is included in this document.

It is important that the IEP team understand that the CRT and CRT-Alternate are new tests and that the regular CRT allows for an extremely broad range of accommodations. Therefore, it is expected that the vast majority of students with disabilities will participate in the regular CRT.

Common Questions Regarding Students With Disabilities Participation In The Criterion-Referenced Tests: Regular CRT And CRT-Alternate

The following question/answer format is designed to assist directors of special education, school administrators, test coordinators and other school personnel in understanding how students with disabilities can participate in the state Criterion-Referenced Tests (CRT and CRT-Alternate).

1. Are there two different state assessments required for all students during spring of the 2003-2004 school year?

Yes. The Iowa Tests and the Criterion-Referenced Tests. The Criterion-Referenced Tests (CRT), are new for Montana and will be administered for the first time in spring 2004 in the subject areas of math and reading to those students in grades 4, 8 and 10.

2. Are there two different state alternate assessments?

Yes. The Alternate Assessment Scale and the CRT-Alternate. The **Alternate Assessment Scale** must be used as the alternate test when a student with disabilities cannot participate in the Iowa Tests, even with accommodations.

The **CRT-Alternate Assessment** is a new assessment (spring 2004) that is specifically designed for students who are unable to participate in the regular CRT, even with accommodations. Only IDEA-eligible students with significant cognitive disabilities are allowed to participate in the CRT-Alternate.

3. Is the CRT-Alternate aligned with state achievement standards?

Yes. The CRT-Alternate is aligned with state achievement standards, but it is designed using expanded benchmarks and thresholds of performance are judged against alternate performance standards.

4. When the regular CRT is administered, can the Alternate Assessment Scale be used instead of the CRT-Alternate?

No. Students must either participate by taking the regular CRT or the CRT-Alternate. The Alternate Assessment scale is the alternate for the Iowa Tests and cannot be used in place of the CRT or the CRT-Alternate.

5. If a student is in an 'ungraded' program, how do we decide if the student will participate in the state CRT assessment?

If the student is in an ungraded program and is of the same chronological age as students in grades 4, 8, or 10, then he/she must participate in the state CRT assessment.

6. Can a student with a profound disability be excused from participating in the state assessment system?

No. All students must participate. It is likely that a student with profound disabilities would be administered the CRT-Alternate. Refer to the CRT Eligibility Criteria Worksheet for determining participation in the CRT-Alternate.

7. Who decides if a student with disabilities will participate in the regular CRT or the CRT-Alternate?

In accord with IDEA '97 requirements, it is the IEP team that makes the decision.

8. Can the IEP team decide that a student with disabilities will not participate in the state assessment?

No. In accord with state and federal requirements, all students with disabilities must be included in the state assessment system.

9. Is reading the reading test to the student for the CRT an allowed accommodation?

Yes, if the student's IEP team has determined that this accommodation must be provided. Such an accommodation is considered to be a non-standard accommodation.

10. If the reading test is read to the student, how is the student's score reported?

Reading the reading test to the student is considered a non-standard accommodation. Therefore, the student's performance in that subject area will be reported at the 'novice' performance level, regardless of test results.

11. If a student takes the regular CRT using a non-standard accommodation, must the student also take the CRT-Alternate in that subject area?

No. The student's participation in the regular CRT, even with the use of a non-standard accommodation, is all that is required.

12. How will the student receive the accommodation(s) determined appropriate by the IEP team to participate in the regular assessment?

The school is responsible for establishing a process that ensures students with disabilities receive the required accommodations identified as necessary by the IEP team. It is critical that the test administrator have such information prior to test administration. When accommodations are given, they must be reported on the student response form in accord with instructions in the test administrator's handbook.

13. What documentation is required on the IEP to address a student's participation in state-level assessments?

In accord with 34CFR 300.347, the IEP must document (identify) if the student will participate in the regular state-level assessment (CRT) or the alternate assessment (CRT-Alternate): and

If the regular assessment (CRT): The team must also document any individual accommodations, if any, that must be provided in order for the student to participate in the regular assessment.

If the alternate assessment (CRT-Alternate): The team must also document:

- The reason why the regular assessment (CRT) is not appropriate for the student; and

The IEP team must also ensure that the student's parents are informed that their child's performance will be based on expanded benchmarks and alternate achievement standards [reference 34 CFR 200.6(A)(2)].

14. If we already had an IEP team meeting this school year or last spring and determined that the student will take the alternate test, is it necessary to reconvene another IEP meeting?

It depends. The CRT is a new state assessment that incorporates a 'universal' design and allows an extremely broad range of accommodations. Therefore, it is expected that the vast majority of students with disabilities will participate in the regular assessment (CRT). The regular CRT is available in Braille and large print format and allows for any accommodation that a student may require (e.g., assistive technology, interpreter, reader, extended time, etc.). It is critical that the special education teacher review the student's current IEP, ensure that the IEP appropriately documents the student's participation in the assessment (whether regular or alternate) and also addresses the other requirements for documenting participation in the state CRT assessment.

If the IEP does not include all of the required assessment documentation and/or it is felt that the student may participate in the assessment in a different manner than was previously determined (e.g., instead of the alternate, the student can participate in the regular assessment (CRT) with accommodations), the IEP team must reconvene to address how the student will participate. It is permissible to hold the IEP meeting through a teleconference call with IEP team participants.

15. Are the scores of students with disabilities who participate in the CRT-Alternate assessment included in AYP calculations?

Yes. In accord with the Title I final regulations found in 34 CFR, Part 200

16. Is it permissible to give equal weight to proficient and advanced performance based on the CRT-Alternate assessment scores in calculating school and district AYP?

Yes, if it does not exceed 1 percent of all students in the grades tested calculated at the district level.

17. Is the 1 percent cap applied to only the number of proficient and advanced scores achieved on the CRT-Alternate?

Yes.

18. Is it permissible for a student with disabilities to take the CRT-Alternate in one but not both subject areas?

Yes, but the decision as to whether the student will participate in the CRT-Alternate must be based on the CRT-eligibility criteria (refer to the CRT-Eligibility Criteria Worksheet).

19. Where can I find the final regulations for the inclusion of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities in Title I assessments?

The final regulations can be found at the following Web site:

www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oese/news.html

ACCOMMODATIONS (STANDARD AND NON-STANDARD) FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE CRITERION-REFERENCED TEST

Universal Test Design

The Criterion-Referenced Test (CRT) was developed and designed using the principles and concepts of “Universal Test Design.” Universal Test Design ensures access to tests for all students by ensuring that test items access the knowledge and skills in the most simple and straightforward manner possible and the test format presents the items in the most uncomplicated way possible. The CRT is an untimed test, although there are suggested times and guidelines. Regular administration of the CRT usually occurs in a group setting.

Options for Participation

To ensure that all students can participate, the CRT provides accommodations, standard and non-standard, and an alternate assessment. NOTE: codes and directions for coding test accommodations may be found on pages 21-23 of the *Test Administrator’s Manual*.

Without Accommodations	With Standard Accommodations	With Non-Standard Accommodations	CRT-Alternate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For students who do not require accommodations of any kind. • Group setting • Untimed – with guidelines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Available for any student (students with disabilities <u>as well as</u> students without disabilities) when an accommodation is necessary to allow the student to demonstrate his/her skills and competencies. ▪ Must be coded in the student response booklet. ▪ May be given in either, or both, reading and math portions. ▪ Does not change intent/content of the test. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ For a student when specified in his/her IEP/504/LEP plan. ▪ Must be coded in the student response booklet. ▪ May be given in either, or both, reading and math portions. ▪ Changes the intent/content of the test. ▪ When a non-standard accommodation is used, the student’s score will be reported in the NOVICE performance category for that content area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ For a student when specified in his/her IEP. ▪ For students who have a significant cognitive disability. ▪ Must be coded in the student response booklet. ▪ May be given in either, or both, reading and math portions. ▪ Based on alternate achievement standards.

STANDARD ACCOMMODATIONS

CODE ALL THAT APPLY:

Scheduling Accommodations

Tests were administered

1. at a time of day or a day of the week based on student needs.
2. in appropriate blocks of time for individual student needs, followed by rest breaks.
3. with time extended beyond the regular test administration allotments until, in the administrator's judgment, the student could no longer sustain the activity.

Setting Accommodations

Tests were administered

4. individually (one-on-one).
5. in a small group.
6. in a carrel.
7. in an alternative setting.
8. by other school personnel known to the student (e.g., LEP, Title I, Special Education).
9. at the student's home, by school personnel.
10. with the student seated in front of the classroom.
11. with the teacher facing the student.

Equipment Accommodations

Tests were administered

12. with the student using magnifying equipment.
13. with the student wearing noise buffers.
14. using a template.
15. with the student using amplification equipment (e.g., a hearing aid or auditory trainer).
16. with the student using a typewriter or word processor (without activating spellchecker).
17. using voice activated technology.
18. using a bilingual dictionary.

Recording Accommodations

19. The student's answers were dictated to the test administrator and recorded in the student answer booklet by the test administrator.
20. The student marked or wrote answers with the assistance of a technology device or special equipment. The student's answers were transferred by the test administrator to the answer booklet.
21. Other assistive technology routinely used by the student and that does not change the intent or content of the test was used.

Modality Accommodations

22. Tests were read to the student by the test administrator (with the exception of the reading test). Note: Readers must read test items/questions and reading passages to the student word-for-word exactly as written. Readers may not clarify, elaborate, or provide assistance to the student regarding the meaning of words, intent of test questions, or responses to test items/questions.
23. Tests, including directions, were interpreted for students who are deaf or hearing impaired (with the exception of interpreting the reading test).
24. An administrator gave test directions with verification (by using a highlighter) that the student understood them.
25. An administrator assisted students in understanding test directions, including giving directions in native language.
26. Tests were read in "Sheltered English" content for an LEP student (with the exception of reading the reading test).

Other

27. Braille
28. Large Print

Non-Standard Accommodations

Non-standard accommodations are changes in the way testing is presented or in the way a student responds to test questions that may alter what the test measures. Teams should exercise caution in considering whether a student requires a non-standard accommodation.

Non-standard accommodations are only available for students with IEP/504/LEP plans.

- For the test(s) the student takes with a non-standard accommodation, the score for that test(s) will automatically be reported in the **NOVICE** performance category for that content area. Test administrators will code the non-standard accommodation on page 2 of the student's response booklet.

The following is a partial listing, by example, of methods of administration that would be considered to be non-standard.

29. Reading aloud the reading test to a student or the student uses text-reader software. A student for which this type of non-standard accommodation might be used would be a student with a learning disability in reading who, without the text being read, could not participate in this portion of the test.
30. Student uses a calculator, number chart, arithmetic table, or manipulatives on non-calculator sections of the mathematics test. A student for whom this type of non-standard accommodation might be used would be a student with a learning disability in math who, without the use of a calculator, would not be able to perform any math calculations or functions.
31. Tests were translated into native language for an LEP/ELL student. Translation is to be done by local personnel.
32. Other (with verification from OPI).

CRT Eligibility Criteria Worksheet

This form is intended to assist IEP teams in determining whether the student should participate in the regular CRT or the CRT-Alternate and to address documentation requirements under IDEA. The IEP team must decide which test (CRT or CRT-Alternate) the student will participate in. This form, when completed, must be attached to the student's IEP.

Student: _____ District: _____ Grade/Age: _____

For each of the statements below, circle yes or no		
Does the student have an active IEP and receive services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)?	YES	NO
Do the student's demonstrated cognitive abilities and adaptive behavior require substantial adjustments to the general curriculum?	YES	NO
Do the student's learning objectives and expected outcomes focus on functional application of skills, as illustrated in the student's IEP's annual goals and short-term objectives?	YES	NO
Does the student require direct and extensive instruction to acquire, maintain, generalize and transfer new skills?	YES	NO

If you answer "NO" to any of the above questions, the student must participate in the regular CRT. If all answers are yes, the student is eligible to take the alternate and considered to be a student with a significant cognitive disability.

The decision to determine a student's eligibility to participate in the CRT-Alternate may not be based on:

- Excessive or extended absence;
- Disability category;
- Social, cultural or economic difference;
- The amount of time receiving special education services; and
- Academic achievement significantly lower than his or her same age peers.

DOCUMENTATION OF THE IEP TEAM'S DECISION
(check the one that applies)

- ☐ The student will participate in the regular CRT with no accommodations.
- ☐ The student will participate in the regular CRT with the accommodations noted in the student's IEP.
- ☐ The student will not participate in the regular CRT, but instead will be assessed using the CRT-Alternate.